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SUBJECT: SWISS REPLY ON VENEZUELAN ANTI-NGO LAW

REF: SECSTATE 97547

Classified By: Poloff Eric Lundberg, Reasons 1.4 b/d

1.(C) The Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) shares USG concerns about the draft Venezuelan law on NGOs. In response to reftel, Swiss DFA desk officer Stefano Vescovi told Poloff on June 27 that the Swiss Embassy in Caracas had been working with the Norwegian, Canadian, and various EU member embassies to raise the issue with Venezuelan MPs. Swiss and EU concerns, he said, were not so much about the "framework" of an NGO law, but rather the vagueness of the wording, which would leave worrisome room for abuse by the government as it fashioned the implementing regulations. The law should not become an instrument of political control and harassment. Vescovi said that the MPs with which his embassy had spoken appeared to appreciate these concerns. Vescovi thought it was constructive that a group of local NGOs and the Catholic university were challenging only aspects of the law, and not the law in its entirety, since an acceptable compromise might be feasible.
Urban